

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Annual Meeting – January 19-21, 2005
Fish and Game Headquarters
Boise, Idaho**

January 19, 2005

Workshop

The Commission workshop was called to order by Secretary Steve Huffaker at 12:00 p.m. Commissioners Alex Irby, Gary Power, Wayne Wright, Cameron Wheeler, and staff were present.

Strategic Plan

The subcommittee of Commissioners Power and Wheeler worked with staff to revise language in the Compass to make it more understandable to the general public. They made no substantive changes to the content of the Plan but revised verbiage that was misunderstood or unclear.

Commissioner Power commented that the subcommittee process was very helpful and recognized Tracey Trent, Chief, Natural Resource Policy Bureau, and his team's efforts. He noted that there was considerable concern expressed by some hunters and anglers about nongame programs and how they are funded. People misunderstood the comment that there is no general fund money for nongame and drew the conclusion that the Department would be seeking general fund dollars. Edits were made to clarify where funding is obtained (e.g. wildlife license plates, sportsmen donations, etc.)

The Director suggested forming a task force or blue ribbon panel on the issue of nongame funding. With the state comprehensive strategy, the US Congress could substantially increase the funding base, which is currently \$700-\$800,000 per year that the Department matches with license plate money. If that increases to \$2-3million, it would be difficult for the Department to find matching funds.

12:10 p.m. Chair Hadley and Commissioner Gibbs joined the meeting.

Commissioner Irby suggested approaching Senator Gary Schroeder about the nongame funding issue. Commissioner Wright suggested looking at other states' plans and programs where they have addressed this issue and found funding sources compatible with constituents.

Commissioner Gibbs noted a change on Page 5 of the text-only version of the Compass sent to Commissioners. The third line should have been changed from built to developed. He also suggested adding something on Page 2 to the effect that the Compass is not intended to limit the duties and responsibilities of future Commissions. Mr. Trent pointed out that on the last page of the document there is a reference to a five-year review and revision which would give future Commissions the opportunity to make changes. He will also add a statement that The Compass is a dynamic document.

Commissioner Power commented that the Plan focuses on collaboration and communication and points the Department in the right direction. Commissioner Wright commented that much work and discussion

had gone into the plan that he wasn't involved in. He would like to have a document that is acceptable to Commissioners, the public, and staff. He asked Jim Unsworth, Chief of the Bureau of Wildlife for his perspective.

Mr. Unsworth stated that the document offers good guidance to staff, addresses the needs of hunters and anglers, and acknowledges importance of species other than game. He feels it is important to staff so that the Department manages by objective rather than by action. If you have objectives, you act to meet those. Managing by action can lead to lots of effort but not to desired results.

The Chair asked for additional staff comments:

Mr. Trent commented that the Compass focuses on what needs to be accomplished, which is helpful to staff.

Roger Fuhrman, Chief, Bureau of Communications, stated that the Plan helps management answer the question "why are we doing what we are doing?" The answers are important to legislators and to hunters and anglers and help in prioritizing programs and efforts.

Terry Mansfield, Deputy Director, commented that it is easy to get too tied up in process. It was time for the Department to start validating objectives and translating the words into action. He noted that the Department's activity based coding system is more simplified as a result of tying the codes to strategic goals. He also mentioned that the Office of Performance Evaluation is asking all agencies to report on progress vs. plan, and the Department has a head start on that task with the Compass in place.

Michele Beucler, Staff Biologist commented that the Plan will allow the Department to develop specific performance measures.

White-tailed Deer Plan

Brad Compton introduced Jim Hayden, Regional Wildlife Manager, who presented information on white-tailed deer ecology, population dynamics, Idaho's approaches to management in the past, approaches used in other states, and Idaho's new plan (Appendix 38, Exhibit 1). Mr. Hayden covered the range of white-tailed deer as well as differences between white-tailed and mule deer and discussed the habitat, home ranges and reproductive characteristics of white-tailed deer. He also provided an overview of white-tailed deer population dynamics including the results of a study by Scott Thompson who was contracted by the Wildlife Management Institute to look at different explanations of what affects white-tailed deer populations. Most management approaches are rooted in forage competition, i.e. habitat has the greatest effect. However, at any time, there will be a variety of factors that affect population. These factors change constantly and create management challenges.

The workshop recessed at 1:03 p.m. for Commissioners to attend a meeting with the House Resources and Environment Committee. Topics to be covered in the meeting with the Committee included: an overview of Department programs, wolf management, overview of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, introduction of new Commissioners, and Department legislation.

Chair Hadley called the Workshop to order again at 3:34 p.m.

White-tailed Deer Plan (cont.)

Jim Hayden resumed the discussion of white-tailed deer population dynamics. The management goal is to maximize the number of animals available for harvest. The common management approach is harvest-based and involves estimating deer density, evaluating population density goals, and calculating desired harvest levels. Harvest-based models do not work well in Idaho where winter weather and predators affect populations. Mr. Hayden provided an overview of other states' management approaches and issues they address.

White-tailed deer management in Idaho previously did not include the use of models or aerial surveys, only buck survival rates were part of management strategy, and constituent satisfaction was implied. The new White-tailed Deer Plan includes new targets for hunter participation, opportunity, harvest, and buck survival; and incorporates effort to index populations and attitude surveys. These measures are consistent with the recommendations of the Wildlife Management Institute.

Brad Compton, Wildlife Game Manager, provided a review of the information presented at the November Commission meeting and the changes made to the plan (Appendix 38, Exhibit 2). He provided Commissioners with a copy of the revised Plan. The overall direction is to maintain hunter and landowner satisfaction and provide separate species management.

The Plan addresses the need to elevate white-tailed deer in Idaho and provide a statewide management direction. Two sections of the Plan were changed to address concerns by the public and by the Commission. The new version includes an issues/strategy section on white-tailed deer hunting opportunity, which replaces the Clearwater Deer Tag section. The white-tailed deer tag is for white-tailed deer only, standardizes seasons across white-tailed deer range, and includes October and November opportunity. The regular deer tag is good for both white-tailed deer and mule deer but occurs primarily in October. The regular deer tag seasons will be standardized to the greatest extent possible.

The Mature Bucks section was also changed. The change in the Mature Bucks section increased the objectives for buck quality.

Mr. Compton explained that the white-tailed deer range covers approximately half the state and expansion is expected to continue along the river corridor. This is due to changing habitat (i.e. more development which is better suited to white-tailed deer) and the white-tailed deer's ability to better coexist with human activity. They are finding a habitat niche that mule deer and elk can't fill.

Commissioner Wheeler asked about managing units differently for trophy species. Mr. Compton explained that white-tailed deer are managed for higher buck quality standards in the far north and western part of the Clearwater. The white-tailed deer plan recognizes and continues that. The Department has and will continue to gauge public opinion on opportunity vs. quality.

Landowner Appreciation Program

Steve Elam, Landowner/Sportsman Coordinator for the Magic Valley Region presented an overview of the landowner/sportsman program (LAP) (Appendix 38, Exhibit 3) including the history behind the program and its current status. Landowners receive permits based on amount of acreage and only for species that use their property (except in the case of leftover tags). Landowners may designate permits to others without a fee. In 2005, there were 699 landowner appreciation (LAP) registrations. There is a total of 1.7 million acres registered in the program statewide.

Mr. Elam discussed landowner and sportsmen concerns with the program. One major issue is the prohibition against landowners selling their LAP tags. Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho are among the states that do not allow landowners to sell their tags.

Commissioner Wright noted that the Magic Valley has the largest number of LAP registered applicants. Even though it is not legal to sell tags, there are landowners who sell access and give away their tags, which is the same as selling the tags. He stated that it is important to maintain a good relationship with ranchers and suggested the Commission consider allowing ranchers to sell their tags to a certain dollar level (as some states do) in exchange for access.

Commissioner Gibbs commented that part of the problem is the definition of access and “reasonable” access. The Commission would also need to find a way to make the program equitable between small and large landowners. He noted that the program was sidetracked by the requirement for landowners to maintain a diary of access, which was time consuming.

Mr. Elam explained that the legislatively created Advisory Committee oversees the program, and they have weighted the program for larger acreages. The majority of the program works well, but oversubscribed units are a problem. The definition of reasonable access is in depredation law, and it is not an open-gate policy. At some point, the public needs access, but it is up to the landowner. Brad Compton mentioned that there has been discussion about using tags for compensation for Access Yes but that this would take a statutory or rule change.

The Commissioners agreed that the Department needs to address the issues and improve the program. The Director will have staff work with the Advisory Committee to come up with potential solutions that benefit both landowners and sportsmen.

Preference Points

Jim Unsworth, Chief, Bureau of Wildlife provided an update on the work of the subcommittee exploring bonus or preference point systems (Appendix 38, Exhibit 4). Commissioners Power, Wright, and Wheeler participated with Brad Compton and Jim Unsworth. Mr. Unsworth gave an overview of the controlled hunt systems in Idaho (random draws), Oregon (preference points), and Nevada (bonus points) including the pros and cons of each.

Estimated costs for Idaho would be between \$3.50 - \$6.00 per application if harvest reporting and the controlled hunt system are included. In-house cost would be \$2.00 - \$3.00 per application without harvest reporting. There would be more expense the first year or two for set up. Idaho currently charges \$5.50

per application and would likely need to increase the application fee to about \$10.00 to be revenue neutral. The current system costs the department under \$20,000 to run.

In summary, Mr. Unsworth noted that point systems are costly and complicated and may not accomplish what hunters really want. They increase odds for one group but decrease the odds for others, including youth and newcomers to the state. It takes several years for the systems to build up and have an effect. They work well in easy to draw hunts, but there is still no guarantee to draw. Any point system increases in complexity and cost when it is changed over time to attempt to accommodate frustrated hunters. Then the system is broken. There is no perfect system, and each has pros and cons, and there will always be unhappy hunters.

Regardless of whether a point system is adopted, Idaho should continue to maintain single species for moose goats, and sheep, require all hunters to purchase a license first, not allow hunters to use points as currency or to buy points, and make it clear that there is no guarantee of drawing a tag.

Mr. Unsworth passed out information on drawing odds in Idaho and which would be improved by a preference points system. He also passed out information on Nevada's and Oregon's drawing odds (Appendix 38, Exhibit 5). Commissioner Irby asked why states have point systems if they don't work and it costs money. Mr. Unsworth explained that it is because hunters get frustrated with not drawing.

Commissioner Wright stated that the potential problems, including the increased cost, can be overcome. Several years into a point system, hunters have a good chance of drawing, even if it is not guaranteed. With a points systems squared or preference points, over time, perseverance is rewarded and odds increase. With the Nevada system the odds increase up to 66%, and with the Oregon system the wait is longer but the odds get close to 100%.

Mr. Unsworth noted that point systems work well in easy to draw hunts but not in the hard to draw hunts. If the hard to draw hunts constitute a large proportion of the hunters, the result is a lot of disgruntled hunters. He feels the Nevada system lets hunters know there is no guarantee of a tag, but there is a greater probability for perseverance. The Oregon system is more predictable for hunters, but the concern is that people may perceive there is a guarantee.

Commissioner Wright agreed that there would need to be a different solution with the hard to draw hunts. He favors the Nevada system and believes people would rather have their odds increase earlier instead of getting to 100% at some point. Commissioner Wright feels the Commission needs to put a point system in place and is concerned that if the Commission doesn't act, the Legislature may.

Commissioners agreed that implementing a point system would make hunters feel the Commission is doing something. Commissioner Wheeler noted that charging a higher application fee would require legislative action while requiring the license fee up front could be done by Commission rule. Commissioners agreed to add further discussion of a point system to the agenda for Thursday.

The workshop recessed at 6:56 p.m.

RULES

Public Hearing

Chairman Nancy Hadley called the public hearing to order at 7:03 p.m. She introduced Chairman-elect Marcus Gibbs and Commissioners Cameron Wheeler, Alex Irby, Gary Power, Wayne Wright, and Director Steve Huffaker. Staff introductions were made, and the Director gave an overview of the Agenda and action items for January 20 and 21 including non-biological rules for the taking of big game animals and biological rules for moose, goat, and sheep. The hearing was opened for public comment.

Brad Moss, board member of Idaho Chapter Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (ICFNAWS), asked the Commission to consider changing the regulations for bighorn sheep from a ¾ curl requirement to any ram. He stated he has talked to several states that have any ram rules, and they indicated this is easier to control. Mr. Moss also talked to Dale Toweill in the Department's Wildlife Bureau, who indicated that in the first two or three years this change might result in smaller rams, but not beyond that. He stated the change would not affect sheep biologically, and would eliminate the need for enforcement to monitor the size of the curl. He talked to the chairman of national FNAWs, who has sent a letter that Mr. Moss will forward to the Commission saying they have no problem with the proposed change. He responded to a question from Commissioner Gibbs that this change would be for both California and Rocky Mountain bighorns.

Kathryn McNary spoke in support of the Idaho Community Action Network's (ICAN) request for a family survival package. She stated that hunting is very important to low-income families.

Robin McNary spoke in support of the family survival package. She didn't get to go hunting this year because her parents couldn't afford the license.

Shirley Lethcoe spoke in support of the family survival package. She stated that many people have children and grandchildren who will be the next generation of sportsmen, but a lot of them cannot afford licenses, hunter education, and tags. She stated that they are not asking for welfare, but they want their children and grandchildren to be able to afford to hunt and fish. The only way is to offer lower rates for low income and disabled people. She stated that if hunting and fishing were more affordable, more people would participate.

Tom Judge, with Idaho State Bowhunters, spoke in support of the proposed changes to moose draw regulations. The group did want to know whether there would be a waiting period between antlered and antlerless draws. They are also concerned about pressure on herd strength. The Bowhunters have a board meeting this Saturday to discuss several last-minute legislative issues and that would be a good time to bring anything to the board that the Department might need help with.

Anna Walling, Caldwell, spoke on behalf of ICAN. They are asking the Commission to act on a family survival package. Ms. Walling contends that real sportsmen are the ones who hunt and fish to feed their families. She stated that many people who rely on hunting and fishing for food cannot afford the licenses and permits.

Commissioner Watts joined the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Ed Hedges, stakeholder with the CJ Strike Wildlife Management Group, stated their concern over the new agreement with Idaho Power for management of the CJ Strike Wildlife Management Area. He said the group would be happy to pay more to continue to use the area. He provided a letter to the Director and Commissioners in support of the Department's fee increase proposal and thanked the Department for their efforts.

Kelton Larsen, Idaho Chairman of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife (SFW), relayed their support for the Mule Deer Initiative and asked the Department to stay focused on one area before spreading statewide. He relayed some of the comments he hears from sportsmen. He hears that the Department is only interested in managing money and not wildlife. They are concerned about how the Department can set tag limits before knowing what populations are. Sportsmen want to look at the resource first, then sportsmen, and Fish and Game last. He also hears about buck to doe ratios, which are not good -- the goal is to have a healthy herd, and other states are getting good ratios even in drought conditions. SFW believes we can improve things in Idaho if we take the right steps and have aggressive management. Sportsmen want bonus or preference points. Mr. Larsen also receives comments about predator control. SFW is not in support of eradicating any species, but supports aggressive management when populations are low, especially in Southeast Idaho. Some sportsmen are in favor of closing the mule deer season until populations recover. Mr. Larsen asked the Commission to set a timeframe for managing wolves.

Tom Demorest, Diamond D Ranch, spoke on the big-game situation in Unit 27. He stated that three or four years ago the area got an influx of bears. They are seeing a good increase in big-horn sheep. The does this spring were in good shape with lots of fawns, and they saw an increase in mule deer, especially bucks. He would like to see a 3-point buck only for the whole season. He is concerned about elk and doesn't see herds growing. They are getting good recruitment, but they aren't drawing from other areas. They have wolves in the area, but they don't see them as much in the winter. He asked the Commission to extend the season on bobcats through the closing of mountain lion season.

Ron Matthews, with ICAN, asked the Commission to provide a survival package. He stated the net loss between the survival package fees and the full-price licenses and tags would be about the same as one employee's salary for a year and would feed about 3,000 residents. Mr. Matthews provided a handout with the sources of his information. He stated that more people are becoming food insecure in the state. He stated that if the Commission raises the prices of hunting and fishing tags that will shut out low income people. Mr. Matthews suggested another alternative to offer a special tag for low income families. The Department already has a system in place to offer special tags and this would offer a greater opportunity to over 400,000 people. It would mean a smaller profit but a broader base for the Department.

Bob DiGrazia, past President of Idaho FNAWS, relayed his concern with dropping the 4-year-old and $\frac{3}{4}$ curl ram requirement. He stated that the biology on the issue is all over the board. He talked to the executive director of FNAWS and looked at the Wild Sheep and Goats Council's data. He said there is no real science that says the change will do good for sheep. It would be a management tool for people who break the law. He feels we are coming out of precipitous decline of sheep populations and need to focus on transplanting sheep and procuring safe habitat. Efforts are better spent managing for all sheep than

managing for a few trophy sheep that may be taken illegally. He would rather the Department focus on habitat and biology management that will put new sheep on the mountain.

Cherie Barton, President of Idaho Wildlife Federation, spoke in support of the license fee proposal. The Federation is concerned that the indexing is not included; they feel the Commission needs the authority to regulate the fee structure to manage the Department's budget each year and not depend on large increases every 7-10 years. Asking only for the 13.7% increase this year, which simply allows the Department to meet inflationary costs, jeopardizes the chance to get an increase next year or in the next few years. There are a lot of management challenges, and they require adequate funding. The Federation asked the Commission to revisit indexing. The Federation feels it is the Commission's responsibility to ensure stable funding. Ms. Barton also thanked Commissioner Hadley for her work the past year and welcomed the two new commissioners.

Karen McWilliams with ICAN spoke on behalf of the family survival package. She stated that increased fees put hunting and fishing out of reach for many rural Idahoans. Ms. Williams provided statistics on the income divide between rural and urban residents. She feels, we need to protect assets for rural Idahoans. The cost of licenses and tags keeps families from hunting and fishing and passing on traditions to their children. She asked the Commission to endorse the family survival package.

Chuck Middleton, President of Idaho Chapter FNAWS, thanked the Department for efforts to increase sheep populations. Mr. Middleton shared a letter and photo of a trophy bighorn taken in Unit 11. Mr. Middleton asked that the Commission not adopt the Department's recommendation to increase the number of permits in Unit 11. They are asking to continue with a restrictive harvest policy of only two rams harvested instead of the proposed four. They feel an increase would impact the amount of money they are able to raise in the Super Tag lottery and FNAWs drawing.

Bob Minter, President of Ada County Fish and Game League, welcomed the new Commissioners. He expressed the club's support for the fee increase and reiterated Ms. Barton's comments on indexing. The League feels it is easier for sportsmen to accept a smaller increase periodically rather than large increases. Mr. Minter feels sportsmen would welcome a preference points program. He expressed concern about proposed changes in moose regulations. After discussing the changes with Department staff, they can accept all but the recommendation to adopt trophy regulations for moose in some units. He doesn't feel that setting some units aside and restricting permits to raise bull moose size is the right thing to do. The League supports the White-tailed Deer Plan and feels it is time to manage the two species separately. The Plan gives additional options to hunters. Mr. Minter said his club is willing to step forward and assist young people to get into hunting and fishing. He suggested a tax write-off for people to contribute to a program to assist first-time license buyers or youth who want to take hunter education. He suggested that perhaps other organizations would be willing to help as well.

Nate Helm, Executive Director for SFW, said the Department has worked with them on questions and concerns regarding allocation of resources and flexibility to use discretionary funds for nongame in the Strategic Plan. SFW has concerns about the White-tailed Deer Plan, specifically the impact of concentrating hunters in the lower part of the Clearwater. Moving seasons into consistent form and increasing buck quality objectives are steps in the right direction. SFW supports Wildlife Management Areas as recreational

areas rather than preserves, especially in the Treasure Valley. Members support extension of bear seasons where populations will allow. Mr. Helm thanked the Commission for reviewing the issue of preference/bonus points, and SFW is interested in working to get something in place. The SFW board does not support the Department's fee increase as proposed. Director Huffaker will meet with the SFW Board early next month to discuss their concerns. Mr. Helm thanked the Commission and the Department for efforts on the Mule Deer Initiative. The group is concerned with the strings attached to the process of managing wolves. They asked the Commission and Department to start the process of working with the Department of Interior to get wolves delisted and start managing them.

Harold Rose, representing Eastern Idaho Houndsmen Association, thanked the Department for efforts on big game management issues. They would like consideration of reinstatement of the female mountain lion quota in the Upper Snake region and requested a private meeting to discuss the issue of the struggling population. They are still finding lions, but they would like a limit to control the take.

Nappy Neaman, from the Wood River Valley, updated the Commission on his research of mountain goats in the Wood River and Sawtooth Valleys. He has been working in field for many years on mountain goats. Mr. Neaman pointed out his concerns with the proposed changes to rules on mountain goats. He said that the increased population does not warrant the proposed harvest of 11 animals, and he believes that mountain goats bring in more money from viewing than they do from hunting. He believes the baselines are not correct and asked the Commission to get better numbers with another year of flights. Mr. Neaman asked the Commission to look at the Department's management plan, which shows the non-consumptive value of mountain goats, and to carefully review the research.

Darla Campbell, Caldwell, spoke in support of the family survival package. She doesn't think it is right that youth who want to hunt and fish are shut out because of financial constraints. Hunting and fishing can keep youth out of trouble. She encouraged the Commission to look at the survival package as a youth program.

Ray Waterbury, Idaho Houndsmen Association, spoke in support of the fee increase proposal. The group recognizes the Department needs funds to carry out programs.

Marv Hagedorn, Meridian, congratulated the department on the antelope transplant. He also commented on the Strategic Plan, which he said addresses a wide variety of species that sportsmen don't pay license dollars to support. He believes nongame species and rare plants will dilute resources to focus on fish and game animals. Mr. Hagedorn stated that sportsmen want to support the Department, but the Department has to support sportsmen.

Ted Koch, Boise, lifetime license holder provided a handout and thanked the Department for its efforts. His concern involves his moose hunt in Unit 68. He stated that he didn't really have the opportunity to hunt moose because the Department has paid to remove moose in that unit. He asked for his money back for last year's tag and the opportunity to put in again. He stated that moose problem interactions are from January to June, and hunting season is August through October. A viable alternative would be to offer a depredation opportunity rather than a tag opportunity.

Al Marion, Garden Valley, spoke on muzzleloader regulations and spoke in support of use of conical bullets in traditional muzzleloader hunts. He stated that round balls create least effective wounding loss. He also took issue with defining legal projectiles based on size and shape. He does not believe that is a good way to do it and suggested using a minimum weight instead.

Bryan Sprague, American Falls member of SFW, agreed with Nate Helm's comments. He complimented the Commission on their genuine interest in sportsmen's issues. He feels the Mule Deer Initiative has a lot of merit and would like to see it move forward with committed funding for the future. He expressed concern over the increase in non-resident tag sales while mule deer numbers are at historical lows.

Joseph Peterson, with Flying B Ranch, a hunting/shooting preserve in Kamiah, ID, spoke regarding the issue of shooting preserves. Legislation was proposed last year to increase the size of shooting preserves, which is a way for their business to grow. He noted that the Commission visited the Flying B Ranch. In working with the Department, they have not come to an adequate solution yet. Another bill is being introduced in the Legislature this session, and he would like the Commission to support the bill and help the business.

Larry Ciejka, Meridian, spoke regarding ATV use in hunting. He has lived in other areas where the use of all ATVs was closed from 2:00 a.m. to noon so that hunters who want to walk in can do so without conflicting with ATV users. He asked Commission to consider that option. He also commented that he has scouted in the Big and Little Lost River area and heard that ranchers shot antelope and buried them due to depredation.

Michael Murray, Idaho Muzzleloaders Association, concurred with Al Marion that in traditional hunts the maxi ball should be used for better harvest rate and better kill. He stated that the Association is against the use of limited magnification (scopes) on muzzleloaders and asked the Commission to continue to reject that request. He also asked the Commission to look at pelleted powder and go back to granulated powder to keep the weapon in its original intent.

Grant Simonds, Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association (IOGA), thanked the staff who presented at their annual meeting. The IOGA is in agreement with the proposal before the Commission on allocated controlled hunts that would require an agreement to be struck with an outfitter before an individual received a tag. He congratulated Dale Toweill and those who participated in the bighorn sheep transplants. With respect to the trophy species recommendations, the IOGA disagrees with adding 3 sheep permits in Unit 527-1 and reducing permits in Unit 527-4 and 527-2. Mr. Simonds also commented that their group appreciated the notes from Commission meetings that Jack Trueblood provided. These were a very useful tool, and he asked the Commission to consider providing that service again.

Terry Henrickson, spoke on the proposal for an any ram harvest. He stated that the opportunity is there all the time to take a young ram, but he is appreciative that he had to hunt four times to get a mature ram. The older rams are breeding rams, and he is concerned that young rams will be left as hunters go for bigger rams. He urged the Commission to stay with current rules.

Herb Meyr, from Mountain Home, Board member of ICFNAWS, has watched the restoration of bighorn sheep in Hells Canyon. It has been very successful but funding is the limiting factor. He supports the

proposal to increase the number of tags in Unit 11. It is an easy unit to hunt with high success. He also observed that elk numbers in Middle Fork country are way down.

Chairman Hadley thanked the public for attending and for their comments. The hearing adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

January 20, 2005

The Commission meeting convened at 8:04 a.m. with Commissioners Hadley, Gibbs, Wright, Power, and Wheeler present.

MISCELLANEOUS

Agenda Changes

Chair Hadley mentioned the request to take the Financial Report off the consent calendar. Commissioner Watts wanted to discuss legislation and the budget. Those topics are not typically part of the Financial Report and can be discussed during the open session. A discussion about preference points was added as Agenda Item #13a. Agenda Item # 4a was added to discuss a land acquisition matter.

Commissioner Irby joined the meeting at 8:10 a.m.

Commissioner Gibbs Assumes Chair and Opening Comments

Commissioner Gibbs accepted the gavel from Commissioner Hadley and assumed the chairmanship of the Commission for calendar year 2005. The Director presented Commissioner Hadley with an engraved commemorative bowl in recognition of her service as Commission Chair for 2004.

Commissioner Wright thanked Chair Hadley on behalf of the Commission for providing strong leadership. Chairman Gibbs commented that his last term as Chairman started with hiring Director Huffaker, who is starting his fourth year leading the Department. The Department is in good shape and stronger and better today.

Review of Public Comment

There were 30 comments. A discussion of the ICAN family survival package request is on the agenda for tomorrow morning. Other topics from the public hearing are on the agenda as action items.

Commissioner Wheeler asked for some background on the comments made regarding the CJ Strike WMA. The Director explained that for ten years the Department has been negotiating on re-licensing projects including the CJ Strike WMA. FERC issued the license a few weeks ago on the condition that either Idaho Power would manage their own lands at CJ Strike WMA or would have the Department manage the lands for \$138,000. Based on staff recommendations, the Department did not reach an agreement with Idaho Power. Idaho Power will manage their land, and the Department will manage our land. The Department will make sure Idaho Power lands are managed in accordance with the WMA criteria. Sportsmen have paid for improving the WMA are concerned that Idaho Power maintain the

WMA lands as hunting and fishing areas and not turn them into a refuge, camping spots, etc. The sportsmen are engaged with Idaho Power and the Department on the issue.

Senator R. “Skip” Brandt joined the meeting at 8:22 a.m.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Topics in the Director's Report to the Commission included accomplishments of the past year. The Director commented that staff have proven their value to the resource and to Idaho, and they deserve the credit for the accomplishments and which included:

- The sage-grouse effort culminated this year with the decision not to list the bird due to all the field work and coordination done throughout the state.
- Yellowstone and westslope cutthroat were not listed and bull trout is in status review.
- Deer Creek Reservoir was built. Administration streamlined the activity based costing system.
- Wolf management is on the ground and the 10(j) amendment is done.
- The conservation plan for Yellowstone Grizzly Bears was completed and the delisting rule for Yellowstone grizzly bears will be drafted this next year.
- Staff put on the best WAFWA conference ever.
- The Strategic Plan was completed.
- A White-tailed Deer Plan was developed.
- The Mule Deer Initiative was developed.
- The hunter education program was revamped from the ground up.
- A Department magazine was reinstituted.
- Two new offices were built – Idaho Falls Regional office and Nampa Fish Research office.

These achievements were realized while all the routine ongoing tasks were taken care of. The Department is in great shape and has a clear direction for the future. Efforts in 2005 will include emphasis on the Mule Deer Initiative, development of a pilot program for aquatic education with help from a grant from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, moving forward with Access Yes, placing undercover investigators in the regions to catch hard core poachers, finishing three new office, and focusing more on letting the public know all the good things that are going on.

LANDS

McDowell Easement - Craig Mountain WMA:

Last year the Commission approved the Department to purchase a 5-7 acre parcel on Craig Mountain. The owner has decided he would rather grant a perpetual easement for road access, which will ensure public access regardless of any change in ownership.

05-01 Commissioner Irby moved and Commissioner Wheeler seconded a motion TO AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR TO SIGN AN EASEMENT AGREEMENT WITH SANDY MCDOWELL FOR ACCESS TO THE EAGLE CREEK PORTION OF THE CRAIG MOUNTAIN WMA. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

MISCELLANEOUS

Commission Reports

Clearwater Region: Commissioner Irby commended the department for solving the Myrtle Beach issue regarding the Myrtle Access Site on Highway 12. The BLM is managing the campground. White-tailed deer management is still a hot topic. Regions 1 and 2 met to discuss the plan, which includes standardization of deer seasons and tags on a statewide basis, and Commissioner Irby is very happy with the outcome. The communities of Weippe and Clearwater County are organizing to build Deyo Reservoir. Steelhead fishing is good around Orofino. The regional hunter education appreciation banquet in December recognized Orofino's Dave Owsley as 2003 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year. The Region's comments on the Clearwater and Nez Perce Forest Plan Revision were very well done, and it was good input from the Department. Weather conditions have been mild to date, but there will be problems if they don't get some snow. Commissioner Irby shared 2004 highlights from Region 2 including the Deer Creek Reservoir dedication, Senator Crapo's Elk Collaborative, the Clearwater Pheasant Initiative, weed control on Craig Mountain WMA, and the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center, which is underway.

The Director passed around two letters with feedback on the youth mentor program.

Salmon Region: Commissioner Power reported that winter conditions have been very mild, with only 11 inches of snow on the ground in the Stanley basin. Hunters on the Pahsimeroi are upset about the elk situation. Some want to close the season to about 15 days, institute antler point restrictions, do away with muzzleloader, greenfield, and depredation hunts. The hunters and ranchers don't agree on what to do, and the groups need to talk. The big issue out of Salmon is what is going to happen with salmon seasons. Staff has been working on what can be done. The Salmon office construction is going well with a completion date of April. The public still doesn't understand that the Foundation is paying for the building construction, and more publicity would help. On the nongame front volunteers, Fish and Game, and other agencies are having high success locating a number of undocumented populations of pygmy rabbits in the region, which will help keep them off the Endangered Species list. Mid-winter bald eagle surveys had the highest count ever with 137 bald eagles in the Salmon Region. The bighorn sheep transplant was a big accomplishment. Mule deer fawn weights are considerably heavier this year due to the spring rains. Many people don't know that Salmon is the home of the statewide screen program and model watershed projects. There has been a collaborative effort between landowners and agencies to resolve water issues. The Region had numerous waste violations, which kept enforcement busy. Early deer flights showed buck-doe ratios at or above objective. With the Moen property acquisition, the Department will have 1 ½ miles on the Pahsimeroi, which causes concern about loss of tax revenue. The Commissioner and Region staff met with Lemhi and Custer County Commissioners and The Nature Conservancy to work out an agreement on tax issues.

Magic Valley Region: Commissioner Wright has been very impressed with the Region 4 staff; they are extremely responsive. Snowpacks for the region are between 80 and 100 percent of normal. Deer are

doing well, and fawn weights were good, averaging up to 90 pounds. The mortality rate was zero. Buck/doe/fawn ratios were better this year, and the condition of the animals is good. The Region transplanted 38 bighorn sheep in Cassia County. They did well with only three mortalities and six sheep missing (and suspected to have returned to Nevada). The Region had little carryover water, and Magic Reservoir is still hurting. Last fall, the Region renovated two ponds in the Burly area. Enforcement officers continue to work on cases from the fall hunting season. They have been documenting buck harvest by Native Americans in Units 45 and 52. Unit 45 is the premier trophy buck unit in Magic Valley, and the heavy harvest in that unit is becoming a problem. The new office in Jerome is progressing with a May or early June completion date.

Upper Snake Region: Commissioner Wheeler reported there are concerns on the South Fork with cutthroat interbreeding with rainbow trout. Rainbow trout are down 50 percent, but cutthroat are also down. The fish flush and year round season to keep rainbows are starting to have an impact. Hard to get people to keep the rainbows in an historically catch and release fishery. The Region needs water, as the reservoirs are depleted. The Region transplanted 35 sheep in Rock Creek and it was very successful. They also received 100 antelope, which were put in to Birch Creek Valley. Commissioner Wheeler spent some time on deer capture. They haven't completed elk flights yet. The Mule Deer Initiative (MDI) team received an AmeriCorps grant to work on a volunteer program to plant bitterbrush. The Region applied for a grant through the sage-grouse working group for a no-till drill to help with CRP plantings that will also benefit mule deer. Region 6 has come a long way on the MDI and have worked really hard on it, and Commissioner Wheeler appreciates their efforts and leadership. Overall deer numbers look good, and it looks like things are starting to turn the corner.

The Director noted that Wyoming lost their brucellosis free status last year. Their Governor put together a task force who developed a report on the situation, which the Governor accepted. One of the provisions calls for an experimental trap and slaughter operation on one of Wyoming's elk feed grounds. Montana is concerned that if this becomes the method of solving the brucellosis problem, they will have issues with the bison herd in Montana. There is a conference call next week to discuss the issue. Region 6 will be very engaged in that activity. Commissioner Wheeler asked about the status of Rainey Creek. The Director stated that the Department's success at Rainey Creek is what Wyoming is using as the model, but the Rainey Creek herd is 200 elk that are easily accessible. They have 20,000 elk to deal with.

Panhandle Region: Commissioner Hadley reported that the Region has been working with sportsmen's groups on several issues including the fee increase. She has received feedback from sportsmen that they don't get any news from the Department. One of the things she would like to discuss is getting a Fish and Game newspaper in circulation so that people know what the Department is doing. The Panhandle held a reservists' recognition program. The Region completed an eagle watch with the BLM and the USFS. Enforcement officers have been working with border patrol along the Canadian border and doing snow machine patrols. Border Patrol has paid the overtime, and it has allowed the officers to keep track of bobcat hunting and trapping. Bobcat pelts are now running between \$300-\$400 each. There is good news on kokanee in Lake Pend Oreille: they had an excellent egg take (almost 20 million eggs), received 900,000 early spawners from Kootenai Lake, and are trying different things to get new spawning channels and improve the population. The trend lines are looking better, but they don't know if they will be able to open up a kokanee season next year. Ice fishing is great. The \$2 million Farragut Range Development

has created some citizen concerns. The Region will be meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and working to address the concerns. The snowpack is very low, but that is good for big game herds and kokanee.

Southeast Region: Commissioner Gibbs reported that things are going well. The Bear River water systems in Utah and Idaho were 75% of normal on January 1. By January 12, snowpack was 138% of normal. Because the snow came fast and all at once that created some problems with deer not being able to get where they need to go. The Department started deer feeding in several sites in Franklin and Bear Lake County. The quick response helped answer public questions and requests to do something about the problem. It showed the Department was proactive on the problem. The rest of the Snake River drainages are near normal or below normal. The Region has had several public meetings on the Mule Deer Initiative. Monsanto hosted a meeting in Soda Springs and said the Initiative was their number one priority. They issued a grant to the Wildlife Foundation for shrubbery plantings. The Region took aggressive measures in hunt units 70 and 73 with the 4-point buck season last year. The buck-doe ratios made a dramatic improvement. There is a lot of concern about the late muzzleloader season in Units 78 and 75 affecting the buck-doe ratio. Sportsmen want to be involved in scoping. Fisheries was able to do some control work on Montpelier Reservoir. They are discussing treating Blackfoot Reservoir. That will depend on water levels/conditions. The Region had three trumpeter swans that were being transplanted to the Bear River area that were shot illegally and enforcement continues to investigate.

Roger Fuhrman reported that the Department is out to bid on the 12-page publication that will be distributed free to vendors, available at Department offices, and mailed to sportsmen's groups. It will be a mix of color and black and white on high-quality newsprint. They expect the first edition out in early February. It will include stories on MDI and wolves. Commissioner Hadley suggested offering it on a subscription basis for a fee. The Communications Bureau also added a feature to the web site that allows people to sign up to receive email updates; 1,500 people signed up in the first week.

Commissioner Wheeler asked about the issue of pelican predation of cutthroat in Blackfoot Reservoir. The Director indicated that pelican predation is fairly well documented, and staff will put together a report that will be presented to the Commission.

CONSENT CALENDAR

The January Consent Calendar contained the minutes of the November 19-21, 2004, Commission meeting and the December 10, 2004, Commission conference call.

05-02 Commissioner Hadley moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

RULES

Non-biological Rules for All Big Game Animals

Dale Toweill, Wildlife Program Coordinator, presented staff recommendations on non-biological rule changes regarding moose harvest:

1) Excluding leftover moose permits from the once-in-a-lifetime rule – many hunters use leftover permits as a second option as they are not able to draw a bull permit. This rule change is the one that received the most public comment. Staff recommendation is to exclude all leftover trophy species permits from the once-in-a-lifetime harvest rule.

2) Allow hunters to harvest one bull and one cow moose (antlered and antlerless)

- Antlerless permits have increased significantly.
- Impact on bull moose drawing success is negligible
- Impact on cow moose drawing success would be about 50%
- Public input supported the recommendation by about 2.5 to 1 margin.
- Moose populations are continuing to expand

Staff recommendation is to allow hunters to harvest one bull moose and one cow moose

3) Provide Trophy Bull Moose

Most hunters feel there are trophy bulls in most units; it is a question of how hard you hunt. Most hunters prefer opportunity rather than reducing permits to increase number of trophy bulls. Staff recommendation is no change, maintain current management guidelines.

All hunters are eligible for leftover permits regardless of their once-in-a-lifetime status. There would be significantly fewer leftover permits for cows if there are both antlered and antlerless permits. All citizens would be eligible for one bull and one cow in a lifetime. The Commission needs to clarify the status of hunters who have used a leftover permit to take a cow and if that will be considered their once-in-a-lifetime cow.

05-03 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE NONBIOLOGICAL CHANGES AS RECOMMENDED.

Commissioner Wright asked for clarification on whether the motion covered all the nonbiological rules being considered. Commissioner Power clarified that his motion pertained to the three moose items and not the rule on muzzleloader technology.

Commissioner Wright asked for clarification on the leftover moose tags. Mr. Toweill stated that under current law all hunters are eligible for leftover permits regardless of previous harvest status. If the one bull and one cow regulation is adopted, it would not affect the ability of all hunters to apply for what leftover permits might be available. The Commission may need to clarify whether this would be retroactive for those who have harvested using a leftover permit.

Commissioner Wright suggested acting on each recommendation separately.

Commissioner Power withdrew his motion and Commissioner Irby withdrew his second.

05-04 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion TO ADOPT AS A TEMPORARY RULE, CHANGES TO IDAPA 13.01.08.260 TO ALLOW HUNTERS TO HARVEST ONE ANTLERLESS AND ONE ANTLERED MOOSE IN A LIFETIME. The motion carried unanimously.

05-05 Commissioner Power moved TO ACCEPT THE STAFF RECOMMENDATION THAT LEFTOVER MOOSE PERMITS NOT BE COUNTED IN THE ONCE-IN-A LIFETIME RULE. The motion died for lack of a second.

After a call for further clarification on whether this would be retroactive, Mr. Toweill made a staff recommendation that from this day forward harvest of trophy species using leftover permits does not apply to once-in-a-lifetime restrictions.

05-06 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Wright seconded TO ADOPT AS A TEMPORARY RULE, CHANGES TO IDAPA 13.01.08.260 THAT FROM THIS DAY FORWARD HARVEST OF TROPHY SPECIES USING LEFTOVER PERMITS DOES NOT APPLY TO ONCE IN A LIFETIME PERMITS. The motion carried unanimously.

Brad Compton presented the proposed rule for Outfitter Allocated Controlled hunts (Appendix 38, Exhibit 6). Prior to submitting an application for an outfitter allocated controlled hunt the individual must have an agreement with an outfitter in that area. Staff has worked with the Outfitter and Guides Association and they are comfortable with the proposed rule.

05-07 Commissioner Hadley moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion TO ADOPT AS A TEMPORARY RULE, CHANGES TO IDAPA 13.01.08.260 REQUIRING THAT APPLICANTS FOR OUTFITTER ALLOCATED CONTROLLED HUNTS HAVE A WRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH AN OUTFITTER PRIOR TO SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION. The motion carried unanimously.

Brad Compton presented information on muzzleloader technology. He passed around samples of conical and round balls and discussed the difference in the two. Conical bullets have been around almost as long as round balls.

05-08 Commissioner Hadley moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO ADOPT AS A TEMPORARY RULE, CHANGES TO IDAPA 13.01.08.410 TO ALLOW THE USE OF CONICAL BULLETS IN TRADITIONAL MUZZLELOADER HUNTS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Chairman Gibbs clarified that the recommendation would change the bullet weight but not allow the use of scopes. Public input was in favor of the use of conical bullets; it was split on the use of scopes. The organized groups do not support the use of scopes, and the Department recommends no change at this time.

Commissioner Wright asked about potential issues with ADA as people have eyesight issues. Dallas Burkhalter commented on the legal implications of the rule. There is no legal liability as this is a selective,

special hunt. They are not being denied access to hunt. They can put a scope on a muzzleloader and hunt in another hunt.

Biological Rules for Moose, Sheep, and Goat :

Dale Toweill, presented trophy species recommendations for 2005-2006 for moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats (Appendix 38, Exhibits 7 and 8).

For moose, the Department proposed an experimental season framework in the Panhandle Region that would add a separate one-week season during the peak of the rut in seven units, which would run concurrent with the standard 86-day framework, and allow hunters opportunity to select better drawing odds in return for fewer hunting days. This pilot program will allow the Department to gauge how will hunters distribute themselves given a choice between 86-day season and a 7-day season. It will also show what success rates will be with a shorter season and more hunters in the field. Mr. Toweill also presented changes in numbers of bull and cow moose permits and new hunt units proposed.

For bighorn sheep, staff proposed one new hunt and an increase in permits statewide from 72 to 80. Proposed permit changes in several units were detailed. Unit 11 has become one of the most renowned in North America for bighorn sheep hunting. There was concern expressed in the public hearing that increasing the number of permits might jeopardize the quality of the hunt in that unit. The unit can support a harvest of 4 rams. Recruitment of legal rams into that unit has been increasing steadily under the 2 ram limit and is about 15% per year.

For mountain goats, staff recommended increasing permits from 40 to 57 and adding new hunts in several units based on survey data from 2004. Testimony at the public hearing included concern about populations in the Sawtooths. With a coordinated survey last year and significant new survey information, managers felt it was reasonable to offer new permits and open some units while still managing goats very conservatively. The Department does manage goats for recreational value. There are two observation points in the Wood River Valley and the Sawtooths. Harvest recommendations should not adversely impact opportunities to watch goats. The state has had a decade of warmer than average weather, and sub-alpine habitat is declining. There are concerns about the health of the herds. Central herds seem to be growing, northern herds are stable, but eastern herds seem to be declining. The Department is working to build a consortium to evaluate how changes in vegetation and habitat impact carrying capacity.

05-09 Commissioner Wheeler moved and Commissioner Wright seconded a motion TO ADOPT BY PROCLAMATION STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS ON MOOSE, SHEEP, AND GOATS AS CONTAINED IN EXHIBIT 7. The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

White-tailed Deer Plan

Brad Compton summarized changes since the November meeting which included increasing buck quality objectives and standardizing seasons to the greatest extent possible. The overall objective is to maintain hunter satisfaction and address statewide white-tailed management.

Commissioner Irby commented that he is pleased that Regions 1 and 2 worked together on the plan revisions. He feels they have come up with one of the best plans possible.

05-10 Commissioner Irby moved and Commissioner Hadley seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE WHITE-TAILED DEER PLAN. The motion carried unanimously.

RECESS

Commissioner Watts joined the group during the Open Discussion period.

Mule Deer Initiative (MDI)

Brad Compton introduced a 10-minute video on the Initiative that will be used in public meetings and other educational forums to explain the initiative, its purpose, and how people can be involved. He provided a status update on the initiative (Appendix 38, Exhibit 9). Current management efforts include fawn monitoring, composition surveys, and emergency feeding in Bear Lake, Big Wood Valley, and Rainey Creek.

Mr. Compton clarified that the Initiative is a statewide program, but the intent is to focus initially on Southeast Idaho where there is the best opportunity to show maximum success due to habitat and recruitment issues. Efforts can expand from there.

The working team will meet at the end of the month at Tex Creek to develop a work plan including specific actions, goals, and accountabilities. The team is comprised of representatives from headquarters, three regions and all disciplines. The goal is to provide the most comprehensive roadmap possible. The Plan will be presented to the Commission at the March meeting.

The Plan will encompass the following areas:

Habitat Management: private land emphasis, aspen restoration on public land, winter range restoration.

Population Management: standardize mule deer season, continue aerial surveys and fawn monitoring, identify key mule deer habitats and where elk may be occupying some key mule deer range.

Predator Management: standardize mountain lion seasons, develop strategy for Wildlife Services, develop programs to encourage sportsmen involvement in predator management.

Access Management: prioritize areas for Access Yes! enrollment, prioritize areas for Motorized Vehicle Rule, develop recommendations for motorized vehicle route densities.

Public Involvement/Outreach: develop opportunities and solicit involvement from volunteers, develop strategies for disseminating information, provide year-round “news” about mule deer and mule deer management.

Mr. Compton provided Commissioners with an overview of the Coordinator's roles and responsibilities which are to:

1. Identify, promote, assist and coordinate MDI management projects.
2. Develop and maintain communication links and provide liaison support to sportsmen and other conservation groups to facilitate their involvement and support.
3. Develop and maintain relationships with state, federal, and private land management agencies; members of soil conservation boards; and private landowners.

Commissioners talked about how to improve communications on the initiative including getting out to agriculture magazines and other groups that are supportive, using sportsmen representatives or Commissioners to give presentations to various groups, and participating in AG expos. It is important to work closely and collaboratively with sportsmen groups and give them ownership.

Commissioners reiterated their support for the Initiative and their commitment to fund the project.

Wolf Update

Steve Nadeau, Staff Biologist, provided an overview of wolf management in Idaho (Appendix 38, Exhibits 10 and 11). The wolf population in Idaho has increased steadily since reintroduction. In 2004, there were an estimated 420 animals, 43 verified packs and 27 breeding pairs. A breeding pair (alpha male and female) is the legal definition of a pack for de-listing purposes. More population analysis will be done this winter.

Wolf observations from the public have increased and totaled about 500 last year. Information from the public is critical. The Department also has a program for outfitters to provide information. Verifying wolves in the wilderness is very difficult. The tribes are monitoring and have put more emphasis where the Department has asked them to. Both money and getting into the wilderness are barriers to getting census data. Commissioners discussed the need for a censusing technique.

Mr. Nadeau provided information regarding wolf impacts on ungulate populations: Habitat issues have had a dramatic impact on elk herds. Right now the population trend is stable to upward and harvest and success rate statewide is relatively stable, though variable depending upon weather conditions, etc. Also, populations are increasing in some areas and decreasing in other units, and wolves may or may not be impacting ungulates depending on a variety of factors. In the Clearwater Region, changes were made to bear and mountain lion seasons that helped to stabilize elk calf:cow ratios, but the populations may still be declining.

Commissioners discussed proving to the public that we are doing all we can to be responsive. The commission wanted to make sure staff continued to look closely at all ungulate data and determine if the data suggest that wolf reductions would be needed in any area. The Department is beginning a major research effort to gather more data. The Director said the state will set the process for peer review and public input on any wolf/ungulate proposal. That topic will be covered in more detail at another Commission meeting.

Mr. Nadeau gave an overview of the new 10(j) rules that give Idaho more authority to manage wolves. Wolves are still a listed species, and the state cannot have a season on wolves while they are listed. However, the Department is currently transitioning into the primary management role for wolves in Idaho. The Department hired two experienced wolf biologists to trap, monitor, and manage wolves.

Jim Caswell, Director, Office of Species Conservation (OSC), was present and clarified that the rules will allow Idaho to manage wolves as of February 7, 2005. Idaho will need to negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of the Interior to expand the state's authority under the current state plan. Idaho can assume the roles and responsibilities of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and become the main managers of wolves in the state, reporting to FWS on a yearly basis. OSC and the Department need to decide what level of responsibility the state wants and write the MOA within the next 3-4 months.

The Director commented that the popular demand is for the state to take full control of wolf management; however, it was agreed that there may be parts of management that the state may not want to have. The MOA should specify which authorities the state wants. Idaho can ask for authority to completely implement the state's management plan with the exception of a hunting season. The MOA should be a start toward what management will look like once wolves are delisted.

Mr. Caswell commented that the plan needs to take into account the resources available for wolf management and the Department's ability to respond to public questions and expectations.

Commissioners agreed that they need to set a strategy and would like to have a concept in place before the next meeting. Commissioner Wheeler agreed to work with Department staff and OSC on recommendations for the MOA to expand state authority.

Strategic Plan

Tracey Trent passed out the final document with all changes incorporated (Appendix 38, Exhibits 12 and 13).

05-11 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED REVISION OF THE COMPASS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

The total cost of developing The Strategic Plan was approximately \$500,000, with the vast majority spent on public input.

Commissioner Watts thanked Tracey Trent and Michele Beucler for their efforts on the Plan.

The Commission decided to take up the agenda item on Preference Points and the State Wildlife Grants/Landowner Incentive Program presentation on Friday.

05-12 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Hadley seconded a motion TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION, PURSUANT TO IDAHO CODE 67-2345(1) TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL MATTERS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

The session began at 4:35 p.m. and ended at 5:50 p.m. No official action was taken.

January 21, 2005

Commission Chairman Marcus Gibbs called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

REPORTS

Stockholders' Report

Jim Lau, Administration Bureau Chief, gave an overview of the Department's Stockholders' Report. The Report is a comprehensive overview of the Department's functions and financial status. He solicited the Commission's feedback on the document. Mr. Lau suggested revising the document next year to be more readable to the general public.

Commissioner Watts joined the meeting at 8:10 a.m.

The Commissioners agreed that the general public would get more out of the report if it were simplified and the detailed financial information were available for those who were interested. The Commission encouraged Mr. Lau to move forward with revising the report in a simplified manner and to report on the past year's results rather than budgeted numbers.

ICAN Request for Survival Package

Steve Barton, Assistant to the Director, provided information on Alaska's and Oregon's low income license programs. Using Alaska as a model, Idaho would need to provide an estimated 30,500 family survival packages. This would result in a potential revenue loss of \$1.1 million. Although this issue has not been scoped with the public, the Department has received feedback from sportsmen who are opposed to the proposal. Those sportsmen felt they should not be expected to pay for a "welfare" program and also pointed out that the Department has a program that requires poachers to pay to have confiscated and salvaged meat cut and wrapped. The Department does provide discounted licenses for junior hunters and senior citizens.

Mr. Barton passed out information on meat that has been salvaged and made available to low income families (Appendix 38, Exhibit 14). He talked with ICAN and has been working with Safari Club International; there may be opportunities to work with ICAN chapters on hunger issues.

Commissioners discussed the distribution centers for salvaged meat and the issues with meat that does not get used. Jon Heggen, Chief, Bureau of Enforcement provided information on how roadkill is handled. The Commission does have a long-running policy on excess steelhead and salmon which is distributed to tribes and families in need. They felt it is difficult to address this issue as ICAN requested and continue to fund the Department given the current revenue outlook and the estimated revenue loss of implementing a survival package. The Commission reached consensus that while they sympathize with the needs of low income

families, the Commission's responsibility is to stakeholders. The Commission decided not to offer a family survival package.

Commissioner Hadley encouraged the Department to look at what makes a salvage program successful and to encourage the sportsmen's groups to make scholarships available to youth who need help with hunter education and youth licenses.

05-13 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Hadley seconded a motion THAT THE DEPARTMENT WORK WITH ICAN AND SPORTSMEN GROUPS TO INCREASE AWARENESS AS TO WHERE PEOPLE IN NEED CAN GET SALVAGED GAME MEAT. The motion carried unanimously.

The Department will work with the Regions on their salvage programs and increasing awareness of those programs.

Chairman Gibbs recognized Senator Skip Brandt who joined the meeting.

Shooting Preserve Overview

Don Kemner, Staff Biologist, provided an overview and recent activities with respect to shooting preserves in Idaho (Appendix 38, Exhibit 15). There are 36 shooting preserves licensed in Idaho (one in each region except Salmon) with an average size of 860 acres. Compared to other western states, Idaho has a relatively small number of preserves. Idaho and Nevada are the only states that do not require all land in a preserve to be contiguous.

The Flying B Ranch submitted legislation last year to allow the size of shooting preserves to increase from 1,600 to 4,000 acres. The Department did not support the legislation to increase the size restriction based on the potential effect on local wild bird populations and the loss of access to the general public. The Department supports shooting preserves but does not support adjusting statutes to accommodate a small minority of shooting preserve operators when such an action may result in significant long-term consequences to wild birds and public hunting in Treasure Valley, Magic Valley, and the Palouse Prairie.

Senator Skip Brandt provided a copy of the draft legislation being submitted to the Legislature this year (Appendix 38, Exhibit 16). He introduced Joseph Peterson from the Flying B Ranch. Mr. Peterson pointed out that the draft legislation includes the stipulation that the land "must not encompass any public land or limit any historical access to public land."

The Director noted that the Department worked with the Flying B Ranch to try to work within the existing law to accommodate the needs of the Flying B. However, what Flying B wanted and what could be done within existing statute were not compatible.

Commissioners expressed concern about restricted public access and species of concern on preserves such as sharp-tailed grouse. Commissioner Wheeler expressed his support of the right of private landowners to use their property as they see fit and supports the legislation.

Commissioner Watts asked if the Flying B would be willing to consider a deeded land aspect to the legislation. Senator Brandt indicated that this would not be a problem. Commissioner Watts commented that shooting preserves are similar in nature to Department WMAs and offer another hunting opportunity.

05-14 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion TO SUPPORT THE LEGISLATION PROPOSED BY FLYING B RANCH RESTRICTED TO DEEDED LAND ONLY. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Commissioner Power noted that last year's legislation was limited to contiguous acres but this year's legislation is not. Mr. Peterson explained that there are preserve operators who run on land that is not contiguous. If those existing preserves were "grandfathered," then the legislation could be changed to require contiguous land.

Commissioner Hadley commented that while the proposed legislation may benefit the Flying B it may not work for all areas, so blanket legislation may have some unintended consequences.

Commissioner Watts suggested that the legislation could potentially be revised to allow exceptions but not offer a blanket of up to 4,000 acres. Senator Brandt indicated he was available for discussion and input.

Preference Points

The Director went over the statistics on hunts that would be positively impacted with a preference points system (Appendix 38, Exhibit 17).

Commissioner Wright noted that there are reasonable pros and cons on both sides. He would like to see a system that would exclude sheep and mountain goats and some of the hunts for elk, antelope, and deer that have less than 10% drawing odds that would create a difficult situation in which to apply a point system. For the majority of other hunts where odds are 10% or greater to draw, preference points make sense. The best two systems are Oregon and Nevada.

05-15 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion THAT STAFF MOVE FORWARD TOWARD THE FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION OF A POINT OR BONUS SYSTEM THAT WOULD INCLUDE APPROPRIATE MOOSE, DEER, ELK, AND ANTELOPE CONTROLLED HUNTS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Dallas Burkhalter, Deputy Attorney General, pointed out that the January meeting is where all non-biological rules are set. Big game regulations will be set in March. The public has not been scoped on any proposed point system.

Commissioners realize that it will take some time to put together recommendations, and it may not be possible to have something implemented for fiscal 2006. The subcommittee was adamant that any system

pay for itself and not cost the Department, so legislation will need to be drafted. A system may actually generate additional revenue.

The Director stated that the staff proposal needs to look at a system that will increase the drawing odds for difficult to draw hunts. Increasing costs with a modification that may not

Commissioner Wheeler stated that a point system is a complicated issue and not one that can be easily scoped. He feels it is up to the Commission to make these decisions.

Staff will meet with Nevada and Oregon officials to gather more information for a future proposal.

State Wildlife Grants and Landowner Incentive Program

Karla Russell, Staff Biologist, presented information on these two new funding sources available in Idaho to address the full array of wildlife in the state (Appendix 38, Exhibit 18).

Both programs will help Idaho get ahead of the listing curve by increasing the amount of information about all wildlife in the state and being proactive. Both are directed at species in greatest conservation need but will benefit all wildlife in the state. They are complementary to the mission of the Department.

The State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program was created by the Nongame Act, passed in 1980, which encouraged states to develop a conservation plan for nongame species. The Department's nongame program was established in 1982, and the first wildlife license plate was released in 1993. Most special plates sold in Idaho are wildlife plates.

Using State Wildlife Grants, the nongame program has been able to double the support to the program and enhance the program statewide. Nongame income is used to match state wildlife grants income (income tax checkoff, wildlife license plates, donations, and sale of goods).

SWG has supported the planning and surveys for the Strategic Plan, the statewide Regional nongame biologists, Third Party Grants Program, and the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS), in addition to other projects. Third Party Grants have allowed the Department to set up a program to accept proposals for projects from outside agencies which supply a match for grant awards. The Department has worked with BSU, U of I, NNU, and Zoo Boise, to name a few, on a variety of third-party nongame projects.

The CWCS is a roadmap to provide a vision for all wildlife in the state that promotes local community-based conservation.

The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) supplements existing programs to provide financial and technical assistance to private landowners, to protect and restore habitats on private lands, and to implement projects

to benefit species of greatest conservation need. The program creates partnerships with landowners and state and federal agencies for habitat improvements on private land. LIP is a nationally competitive program. Both SWG and LIP are proactive conservation programs that benefit all wildlife and provide complementary and additional funding sources. The programs work together -- State Wildlife Grants provide funding, the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy provides a way to organize the data to tell us where to go, and the Landowner Incentive Program is a tool to implement good conservation practices.

The Director commented that some people have perceived these efforts as a threat to hunting and fishing. The reality is that the state has to conserve all species, and the Department has been charged with that responsibility. Congress has recognized this for 20 years, and the state needs to recognize it and secure the necessary funding.

Commissioner Watts suggested that Ms. Russell's presentation and information be posted on the Department's web site.

Volunteer hours can be used as matching for SWG funding. The matching formula varies by program. The Department partners with OSC on other projects, and funding does flow through OSC to the Department for distribution to Working Groups to implement efforts on species of greatest conservation need.

Update on WAFWA Mid-winter Meeting

The Director indicated there was considerable discussion on litigation issues. Senator Reid's legislation to deal with the quiet commerce clause and the intent of Congress to allow states to continue to manage wildlife differently for residents and non-residents did not make it through in the last session. He will reintroduce the bill this session. Some eastern and southern states are not as supportive of the effort as the Western states. The Wyoming ruling was also discussed. Legal counsel from IAFWA said it is incumbent on states vulnerable to suits to look at the issue not from a policy perspective but from a legal perspective. Any policies or procedures should be done with an eye toward the minimal amount of discrimination to protect interests of the state.

The Director also reported on a cougar management workshop where draft guidelines were discussed. There will be additional discussion on the issue at the North American conference in March.

Commissioner Watts reported that there are seven states being sued on the nonresident issue. Nevada has tried to negotiate its way out, but failed. They are considering legislation that would give bonus points to residents, give bonus points for conservation work, give loyalty points, and give lottery points as a means to address the non-resident issue. It will be interesting to see what happens in Nevada. He also noted that there are three states (Arizona, Colorado, and Montana) in addition to Idaho requesting fee increases.

WMA Overview

Jeff Gould, Habitat and Small Game Program Manager, provided a history and overview of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in Idaho (Appendix 38, Exhibit 19). The Department manages WMA's core for the restoration, propagation, and protection of fish and wildlife and to provide hunting, fishing, or trapping opportunities.

WMA management is part of the Department's Habitat Management Program, which also includes managing fishing and boating access areas, habitat improvement, and technical guidance for public and private lands.

The Department manages approximately 480,000 acres, a large proportion of which is big game range (280,000 acres). The Department is very involved in wetlands restoration and manages 59,000 acres of wetlands. The 38,000 upland habitat acres managed by the Department are very important in providing hunting opportunities.

Mr. Gould provided an overview of the functions of WMAs which include providing places to hunt and trap, places to fish, wildlife production, outdoor education, and long-term protection of at-risk fish and wildlife habitat. There are approximately 420,000 user days on the Department's WMAs each year, and at least 1 million fishing days are being provided by fishing and boating access sites.

Mr. Gould provided a summary of habitat expenditures for 2004 which totaled approximately \$5.4 million. Expenses include maintaining and operating dikes, roads, fences, parking areas, buildings, restrooms, and control structures. There are also expenses related to habitat development efforts such as food plots, noxious weed abatement, fire protection, and fire restoration.

The future direction includes a focus on protecting important fish and wildlife habitat, building partnerships, and providing landowner assistance.

A major challenge is securing funds for future expansion and to acquire new areas. Commissioners discussed the possibility of making more use of conservation easements and the need for more WMAs in urbanized regions such as Region 3 where areas to hunt are disappearing. The Commission would like to focus on WMAs and conservation easements at a future workshop.

Hatcheries Overview

Virgil Moore, Chief, Bureau of Fisheries, presented opening comments regarding the Department's hatchery program. Over half of the state's fishing activities rely on the Department's hatchery program, and 100% of anadromous fishing activities rely on the hatcheries. The Fisheries budget is about \$5 million in license funds, with \$1 million tied up in match and \$3.3 million budgeted for the resident species hatcheries.

Tom Frew, Fish Hatcheries Supervisor, provided an overview of the Department's hatcheries around the state (Appendix 38, Exhibit 20). There are a total of 21 hatcheries in the state -- 12 resident species hatcheries and 9 anadromous species hatcheries. There are also 6 satellite facilities.

The resident species hatcheries are valued at \$13.6 million (as of 2001). These facilities produced 990,000 pounds of fish in 2004. They are all relatively old facilities. The Henrys Lake Hatchery, which was built in the late 1880s, is the oldest facility. The Hagerman Hatchery is the largest resident production facility.

The anadromous hatcheries have shown strong results the past few years, producing 1.1 million pounds of steelhead and 443,600 pounds of Chinook in 2004. The Clearwater Hatchery is the largest anadromous hatchery.

The hatcheries are an important public relations tool for the Department. Activities for the public include tours, walk-in visits, classroom programs, and fishing opportunities at the hatcheries.

The hatcheries planted over 40 million fish in 2004 at a cost of about \$0.19 per fish.

Commissioner Gibbs asked about the Clark Fork Hatchery property and whether it might be surplus property. The facility has not been appraised. It would be expensive to raze the building and raceways. It is also a narrow piece of property and would be difficult to subdivide.

Fisheries Awards

Virgil Moore introduced Dr. Keith Johnson and Roberta Scott from the Eagle Fish Health Lab. They were recognized by the American Fisheries Society with the Special Health Achievement Award for improving fish health and, specifically, for their work on bacterial kidney disease. Mr. Moore presented Dr. Johnson and Ms. Scott with a plaque from the Society. Dr. Johnson commented that the project allowed them to improve diagnostic capabilities worldwide. Dr. Johnson thanked the Commission.

MISCELLANEOUS

Legislative Affairs

The Chairman clarified that the Legislative Subcommittee would include Commissioners Hadley, Watts, and Wheeler. The Chairman will also participated in Legislative affairs as needed. Commissioners will hold conference call updates on Legislative affairs if necessary. Steve Barton will provide a weekly written update.

Commissioner Hadley commented that the subcommittee should work on the shooting preserve issue, the disabled definition, the fee increase bill, and the JFAC presentation.

Commissioners agreed that they need to be active with the Legislature to advance the Department's agenda with the legislature.

Commissioner Watts commented that he hears from many legislators on Fish and Game issues and will pass along those comments. He urged all the Commissioners to contact legislators and provide them with information for Fish and Game so others don't assume that role.

Chairman Gibbs would like the Commission to address the issue of Director's tags at a future meeting. This would provide either the Governor or Director with tags they can issue for special circumstances. There was a situation in southeast Idaho with a visiting foreign dignitary who wanted to hunt. Some states so have Director's tags so that they can accommodate those situations.

Commissioners Power and Wright will continue to work with staff on the preference/bonus points issue. Commissioner Wheeler will work with staff on the wolf management issue.

Adjournment

The Commission meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.